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## Young Jack Harkaway

IN ARABIA.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



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# Young Jack Harkaway In Arabia.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,

Author of "Young Jack Harkaway in the Wilds of Siberia," "Young Jack Harkaway in Armenia," "Young Jack Harkaway Fighting the Slave Traders of the Soudan," "Young Jack Harkaway in Cuba," etc., etc.

## CHAPTER I.

### TRAVELING IN THE DESERT—THE SAND STORM—A DISCOVERY—THE TEMPLE IN THE OASIS.

The day, which had been hot and sultry, was drawing to a close. The sun hung like a ball of fire in the heavens. Not a breath of air stirred the circumambient atmosphere.

It was the calm before the storm.

A small caravan, consisting of three loaded camels, as many Arab drivers, and two men on foot, were traversing an arid waste or small sandy desert in Arabia.

They were on the road, if so it may be called, to Mecca, near the Red Sea coast, where the Prophet Mahomet, the founder of the religion of Islam, is buried.

The camels were laden with expensive merchandise and food necessary for a long journey—such as rice, coffee and dessicated meats in cans.

In warm climates life can be maintained without any large consumption of animal food.

The greatest trouble experienced in Arabia when people are traveling is scarcity of water.

Without water in a sandy region life is a burden, which is speedily alleviated by death.

A camel has truly been termed the ship of the desert because he can walk many days without water, which is owing to a second stomach, in which he keeps a store of the precious liquid.

Travelers have been known to kill their camels, sacrificing their valuable lives and the goods they carried to cut out their stomach bags and drink the fetid water contained in them.

What will not men do to quench a raging thirst which is worse than the pangs of hunger.

The drivers wended their way foot deep in the sand, but bore up bravely under the scorching sun.

There were no trees in sight. No sign of water.

Soon they would have to camp for the night and what was to become of them?

Their skin was drawn and irritated, their mouths parched, tongues swollen, lips black and their eyes lacked their usual luster.

The two men behind crawling painfully along with canvas suits and white solar topees or helmets were Europeans.

One was Hunston, the determined enemy of Young Jack Harkaway who was traveling from Persia on the road to Mecca.

He had heard that Harkaway had proceeded in that direction after the death of the Shah, with his wife Clara, Harry Girdwood, Mr. Mole and Monday.

He was resolved to find them.

Not yet had he accomplished his revenge.

Yet he intended to do so before long.

It was the same undying feud, the same warfare which apparently had no ending.

Hunston's companion was a well known traveler in the East.

His name was Alphonse Durand, a native of France, and a Frenchman to his finger tips.

Hunston had engaged him as a guide and companion.

They had gone many miles together to their mutual satisfaction.

This, however, was the hardest fix they had been in since they left Bagdad, on the Persian gulf.

The torrid zone was dreadful, and they saw no limit to the desert waste.

Up to the present time they had not seen or heard anything of Young Jack and his party.

There was little doubt they were not far off.

They might meet at any moment.

Hunston was bronzed by the sun; yet that did not disguise his features.

"Alphonse," said Hunston, "had we not best call a halt? The camels are tired; the drivers can scarcely crawl."

"How can we halt in the desert?" replied Durand. "We must press on. No water—no shade!"

"The further we go the worse we shall be."

"Not so. I have a recollection of this portion of Arabia, and I know that there is an oasis somewhere about in this region."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. Let me look at my compass and take my bearings."

"That's what the sailors say. Where are we? Where is the oasis you have talked about, where the wells spring up, the trees grow, the flowers bloom, and the birds sing?"

"I did not say anything about birds; it is all still life, no fauna all flora; that is ze thing."

"And aqua pura," remarked Hunston.

"Plenty of that if the wells aren't dried up, which they are sometimes."

Durand had a small compass attached to his watch chain; this he consulted; it pointed southwest.

"I reckon we are not more than five miles from ze wells," continued the Frenchman.

"We had best press on," remarked Hunston.

"By gar, if we do not we shall have to kill one camel to get his water bag."

"That would be a pity."

"*Nom d'une pipe*, you are right, ze camels shall cost money."

"I am awfully tired; my throat and mouth are so full of the confounded sand that I can scarcely talk to you."

"It was ze same with me all the time," replied Durand.

"Pah! I am choke up full."

"Perhaps my conversation is no loss."

"Vat was it about? Solve, you are one man of ideas. You have something in your head."

"I was thinking about Young Jack Harkaway," Hunston said. "It is several weeks since we left Persia with the male caravan, but we have heard no news of Young Jack Harkway and his friends, nor have we seen a trace of them, yet we had direct information in Teheran that they were going through Arabia to Mecca, on their way to the Pyramids of Egypt, the ruins of Thebes and other ancient places of interest."

"We are some distance from Mecca," observed Durand.

"*Cher Alphonse*," replied Hunston; "I am well aware of that; please do not attempt to teach me geography."

"Some day we shall meet with them."

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war; I am not afraid of them!"

"Nor I; but, *mon ami*," said the Frenchman. "I was afraid of something else. Do you see that little black cloud over there? It is no bigger than a man's hand. What do you think it means?"

"It portends something."

"Shall I tell you what? It is a storm coming on to us fast!"

"Rain? If so all the better."

"No, sir! By gar—it will have no water in it!"

"What then?"

"Vind, nothing but ze vind, which shall bring on ze sand storm."

"Will it bury us?"

"Very like if we do not get on ze wells first. Ze camels can kneel down and form a wall to protect us leetle bit," said Durand.

"I would rather be in a place of safety," answered Hunston.

The cloud was every minute growing larger, and looking more formidable.

All at once the camels uttered a peculiar sound, and raised their heads as if they were smelling something afar, though nothing was to be seen.

The drivers uttered loud cries.

"Allah il Allah!" they shouted in chorus, their voices now rising, now falling, but always in unison. "Thanks be to the Lord we are near water and the fruit of the oasis, with the cool and leafy shelter it affords! All hail to the prince of goodness!"

There was no stopping the camels.

Laden with heavy burdens as they were, they plowed their way through the sand and rushed in a certain direction.

Their drivers followed at their heels, urging them on with voice and whip.

They saw the sand storm coming. It was their hope that they would obtain shelter before it overwhelmed them.

Well from experience they knew its disastrous effects.

"The camels have taken the alarm!" cried Hunston, "and the drivers are not slow to follow them."

"It will not do for us to be left in the lurch, though, by gar! I have one cramp in my leg," answered Alphonse Durand.

"Don't say that!"

"*Mon Dieu!* it ees true. Holy Mary, Mother of God! give me your arm!"

"You are welcome to it, if it is of any use to you. Hang on, I will steer you."

Durand was far from feeling well; his head was dizzy, and one of his legs so cramped that he moved it with difficulty.

Exerting all his strength Hunston dragged him along, and when the verge of the horizon was reached they saw the longed-for oasis.

It was no mirage or optical delusion.

Camels and drivers were nearly out of sight on their mad march for the promised land.

But before Hunston and Durand could reach the shelter, the cloud of sand, driven by a fierce wind, came hustling and whistling over them.

They fell down on their hands and knees, side by side, with their faces away from the wind.

In less than half a minute they were completely buried, but the storm swept on.

They disengaged themselves as quickly as possible; both wore blue spectacles, which protected their eyes. When they stood up it was with an effort they spoke, and it was with difficulty they heard one another, for mouths and ears were stuffed up with sand.

The oasis broke the force of the storm.

It seemed to part, break in half, and go round it, dying away far off on the plain, so vast and so lonely.

"By gar! Poop—poop—pshaw! atchew—er," sneezed Durand.

"Ve are safe! It ees a miracle, yet ve breathe. Ve live. Ha, ha!"

He laughed in the exuberance of his spirits.

"I thought we were done for," replied Hunston. "But the oasis broke the force of the wind or we should have been entombed. Let us press on, a drop of water to me now is worth a million times its weight in gold."

They held their peace, for talking was not a luxury and trudged on at their best pace.

The oasis was at least three acres in extent, well wooded, with plenty of vegetation, flowers and fruit. Water gushed up in the center and meandered in rivulets and rills in every direction, until its scattered column became lost in the sand.

This spring was the source of life; oranges, gourds, and dates were abundant; the flowers and grass grew high.

When Hunston and Durand entered the place, they made directly for the well, being guided thereto by the voices of the drivers.

Oh! how grateful, how delicious, how suggestive of Heaven after Hades was it to sink down and slake a burning thirst.

When they were satisfied, the travellers unloaded the camels.

From one they took conveniences for cooking and provisions, a fire was lighted, tea made, and an excellent meal provided.

Fancy biscuits, tea, coffee, sardines, corned beef and canned salmon in the desert. Yet it was a reality. The travelers had this for supper.

And more; there was a bottle of three star brandy to act as a *pousse cafe* and a box of El Capitan cigars from far away Cuba, actually made in the city of Havana.

A bell tent was pitched under a large fig tree for Hunston and the guide.

The drivers were able to sleep anywhere, for they had no fear of wild beasts or reptiles of any kind, though strange to say insects abounded.

At night the thermometer dropped several degrees and a heavy dew fell.

In the morning they were awake early. The sun shone through the leafy trees, and a gentle breeze was stirring.

They gathered ripe dates and figs and oranges which they found delicious, a biscuit and a cup of tea afterwards, sufficing to gratify their appetites.

How pleased the camels were to eat the green grass and wallow in the limpid water.

"I should like to turn up a few birds here and some ground game," remarked Hunston.

"Yes," replied Durand; "the absence of life apart from vegetation is disappointing."

"Let us explore, we might find something."

"Just so. With ze utmost pleasure. I should like ze stroll ver' moch."

"Come on, then. Some tribe of Arabs may have lived here in times gone by, and have left some relics of the past."

"I have ze gravest doubt of that."

"There can be no harm in trying to find out all we can. Move yourself, monsieur."

"*Eh, bien. En avant!*" answered the Frenchman, putting himself by the side of Hunston.

The undergrowth was a veritable jungle of vines, briars, reeds and bamboo canes, tangled together.

It was necessary for the two men to take out their knives occasionally and cut their way through.

Wild flowers of a luxuriant growth and gaudy hue were abundant, but singular to relate, none of them had any perfume.

After going a little distance from the wells, they arrived at an open space; it was grass grown. In the center was an octangular building of red stone, nearly fifty feet in height.

Its circumference was about equal to its altitude. A square doorway gave admittance. Over this was rudely carved a crescent, which gave it the appearance of a temple.

Here was a singular discovery.

In the rear was a grove of fruit trees, through which a rill of water flowed.

"I told you we should find something if we persevered," said Hunston.

"By gar! that was a fact. You're clever head, all ze same you getting old. *Vive la bagatelle.* Never say die."

"What do you call this building?" asked Hunston.

"Net a house; sort of church; a temple, but where is ze priest?"

It was just the kind of spot that a fanatic would chose to spend his life and end his days in.

Tired of the cares and turmoil of the world, disappointed perhaps in more ways than one, here peace awaited him and rest for the body if not the mind.

If that is distressed it is not easy to minister to it.

The antiquity of the temple was unquestionable, for the stone of which it was built was discolored by age, and overgrown in the niches and intersices with moss and a kind of lichen.

It might have been a hundred years old, and was certainly not less than one.

"Let us go inside," said the Frenchman; "maybe some one live here."

"Scarcely," replied Hunston. "I do not see any sign of habitation."

"Pardon! I do. Look at here, *mon ami.* You shall look at the grass from ze door to ze grove, it is beaten down by foot marks. Ha, ha! I notice more than you give me credit for. Somebody live in ze leetle house."

"It is not at all impossible. If I were a hermit I could enjoy myself in a sweet secluded spot such as this is."

"You are right, but for me—action—ze world—life—something to do!"

Saying this Durand advanced fearlessly to the temple and entered, Hunston being close behind him.

There was a flight of roughly made stone steps leading to another floor, the lower one being used as a storehouse.

It contained piles of carefully dried figs, dates and raisins, with some species of roots like yams. There was also wild rice.

"Don't this look like the home of a recluse?" asked Durand.

"Very much so," Hunston was forced to admit. "These stores could not have accumulated here without hands, that is certain."

"I wonder if ze gentleman is at home? If so, ve pay him a friendly call. It ees fun to visit in ze desert. Ha! Ha!"

The Frenchman laughed at his jokelet.

His merriment was brought to a premature close in a startling manner.

A stone was dropped on his head from above.

It struck him with such violence that he was compelled to fall on his knees.

"Murder! Help! Call ze police! I am being killed!" the unfortunate Frenchman cried.

Hunston paid no attention to his appeal for assistance.

Drawing his revolver, he ran up the stairs.

Whoever was up there, he did not intend to be trifled with.

Two more pieces of rock were thrown down, but they did not strike Hunston, who gained the next floor.

What he saw surprised him.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HERMIT OF THE OASIS—SECOND SIGHT—NEWS OF YOUNG JACK.

THE room into which Hunston ushered himself without invitation was furnished in a most simple manner. A bench, a table rudely made, and a bed of grass, was all it contained.

Seated on the bench was an elderly Arab, gray-haired, gray-beard-

ed, thin even to emaciation, with a pensive countenance born of long years of solitude and self-communion.

He had a long stick or pole in his hand, as if he was prepared to resist any intrusion upon his privacy or infringement of his rights.

But the sight of the revolver carried by Hunston cowed him completely.

Full well he knew the force and power of such deadly weapons.

He had not been reared and brought up in a desert. The old man had a history.

"*Salaam alickoum!*" he exclaimed. "You are welcome. I wish to be on friendly terms with everyone. Why are you here? What is your object? Have I given you any offense?"

"None whatever," answered Hunston, who spoke Arabic, and understood all that the old fossil said. "I am a merchant, traveling with a caravan of three camels to Mecca."

"Ha! You are making the Hadji. It is a pilgrimage that every good mussulman should make before he dies. I am a Hadji, for I have been to the tomb of Mahomet."

"Why are you here?"

"I committed a sin. A man and I fell out. It happened that I killed him. To atone for this fault, I determined to become a recluse and end my broken life in the desert. This oasis offered the seclusion I coveted."

"The temple! Did you find that here?"

"Ay, it was erected by other hands than mine. I took possession of it."

"Who are you?"

"The Sheik, Ben Hassan, formerly of Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea."

Hunston was in the presence of a man who confessed that he was a murderer.

What seemed to be the light of insanity gleamed from his sinister eyes.

This eccentric character went on to state that he had lived on the oasis for ten years. Not a soul had he spoken to all that long time. His temple and fruit grove were out of the track of travelers. These were few and far between.

If Alphonse Durand had not lost his way, he would not have strayed into the desert.

"We mean you no harm," continued Hunston, "our stay here will be brief, it was entirely by accident that we discovered you. We shall part as we met."

"I wish to be friendly," said the sheik. "My life cherishes no enmity."

"Unhappily mine does, but I am not surprised at you. Just now you informed me that you had killed your man. Mine lives. All I want is to get at him."

"My son," said the Dervish, for such he was, "no man born of a woman is without sin. We are all born to sin as the sparks fly upwards, but we can become regenerate through repentance."

"Then you think you have atoned."

"I have tried to do so, through abstinence and solitary prayer," was the answer.

"Have you succeeded to your satisfaction?"

"I hope so."

"Paradise and the houris, promised in the Koran will be yours."

"While you remain here," exclaimed Ben Hassan, "you are welcome to anything I possess."

"Thank you."

The Frenchman, who had recovered from the blow on the head caused by the rock, now ascended the stairs.

He was welcomed by the Dervish, who had once been a sheik or holy man.

Dried figs were set out, with water from a pitcher.

"I belong to the Aïoussa tribe of Arabs," said Ben Hassan, "they have miraculous powers."

"What are they," Hunston inquired curiously.

"Many. Among others, fire cannot hurt us. We can hold red hot iron in our hand without being injured, and put it in our mouths without being burned."

"I should like to see that performance."

"We are able to handle poisonous snakes."

"That is safe to assert. There is no red hot iron to be had here, nor are there any venomous reptiles."

"Shall I go further than that?"

"If you wish."

"I have the gift of second sight. When I throw myself into a trance, I can tell you all you wish to know."

Hunston smiled incredulously.

"If you can do that," he said, "I will make you a handsome present."

"Silver and gold is of no use to me. Where could I spend it? What is the use of the precious metal to me? Can I hoard it for posterity?"

"You shall have food."

"This oasis provides me with all I require to sustain life. What more do I want?"

"It appears that I can do nothing for you."

"Absolutely nothing. Your face is white. You are a gaiour, an infidel. Your prayers would not avail me."

"I am an agnostic."

"That is worse than being a Christian. Rather would I meet a nazarine."

"Will you tell me what I want to know out of pure good nature, or just for the fun of the thing?"

"You may find no joke in what I have to communicate. Fate is irresistible."

"Do you consent?"

"Yes. Come into the grove; there is more space there. I want some room."

Ben Hassan led the way down stairs.

They quitted the temple and walked leisurely into the grove.

The sun was declining. A cool breeze was blowing, just stirring the leaves of the trees.

Selecting a commodious spot, the Dervish began to agitate his body. His long hair went backwards and forwards.

At the same time he uttered a monotonous chant.

This gradually rose and fell, rising to an alto, then sinking to a gentle cadence.

There was very little music in it as we understand the word.

This went on for ten minutes.

Suddenly he stopped before Hunston, his face convulsed and his mouth foaming.

"What is it you want to learn?" he demanded.

"Where is Young Jack Harkaway?" replied Hunston. "Tell me all you can about him."

The Dervish repeated the name to himself.

There was a far away look in his eyes, which rolled in a fine frenzy.

He began to dance about in a wild manner until the perspiration rolled down his attenuated face in a stream.

His whole frame quivered with excitement.

This continued for a short time.

His strength became exhausted.

He fell down as if he were dead.

Not a move, scarcely a breath, rigid, corpse-like. The soul seemed to have fled from the body.

"This is a strange proceeding," remarked Hunston. "What does the old fellow mean by it?"

"By gar!" replied Durand, "that is one puzzle for me. I do not understand all this fakir business."

"You must have seen it before in the course of your travels in the East."

"True. *C'est vrai*. These fanatics can do wonderful things. In India I have seen the Hindocs make flowers grow on a barren soil in ten minutes. They can throw themselves into a trance for a month or more."

"Do you believe it is genuine?"

"*Ma foi!* They perhaps take some life sustaining drug. How should I know?"

"You are not in the trade."

"Don't want to be. It is time lost. We have not long to live. Let me eat, drink, talk, see things, enjoy myself. What use to sleep all ze time?"

"You are right."

"With regard to ze trance, and ze second sight, I tell you there is something in that."

"How?"

"His spirit go out and meet other spirits."

Hunston shook his head.

"Humbug! Bosh! Nonsense!" he muttered.

A startling revelation however awaited him.

If the Dervish spoke at all, he thought he would have to listen to the ravings of a madman.

But he was altogether mistaken in his conjecture.

Ben Hassan's lips moved. Hunston went to his side and knelt down putting his ear close to his mouth.

"Harkaway is in the desert," he murmured, phonographically.

"How far off?" asked Hunston.

"Half a day's march. He is preparing to rest on the sand for the night."

"Who has he with him?"

"A lady, five camels and drivers; a white man, a colored one, and an old man with a wooden leg."

"Ha!"

In this description Hunston recognized Young Jack, Clara, his wife, Harry Girdwood, Mole and Monday.

They were on the road to Mecca.

Not far off, either.

If the Dervish had not the marvelous gift of second sight, which is a spiritual sense, how could he have been able to reveal this?

It was truly wonderful!

"Will he come to this oasis?" inquired Hunston.

There was no answer.

This was more than he could tell.

All he could describe was what was actually taking place.

The future was beyond his ken.

"There is an end of it," said Hunston. "Is he a fraud or not?"

"I believe what he has told," replied Durand. "Young Jack, as you call him, is within your grasp. He comes. The Dervish has told truly."

"We must act accordingly. He has five camels; we only three; two more drivers. Girdwood, Mole, Monday!"

"The odds are against us."

"They will arrive at this oasis."

"What are we to do?"

There was a pause.

The situation required careful consideration.

At length Hunston said:

"We will leave this old fakir to get out of his trance the best way he can."

"*Morbleau!* he is no further use to us!" replied Durand. "He has torn away the veil of the future."

"The present, you mean."

"Not exactly. Young Jack is not here yet. I wish I had a Maxim machine gun to blow him and his to smithereens—that is all I know."

They left the Dervish and returned to the wells, where they found the drivers enjoying their well earned sleep after a long march.

Soon the moon rose in all its august splendor.

They had camp chairs, a small folding table, and what is so dear to the traveler, a pack of cards.

Nothing passes the time away so pleasantly as a game of cards when men are away from home, and the hours drag along.

When they were seated Hunston exclaimed: "What shall it be? Baccarat, pinochle or eucher?"

"The latter," replied Durand. "It is ze easy game to play; not moch trouble!"

"It requires skill, though, and I bet ten dollars I beat you every time."

"Done with you. I am on ze game!"

They played for a couple of hours with varying luck, eventually Durand coming out the winner.

"I've had enough of it," said Hunston. "Turn it up!"

"If you want your rivanche, have it another time," the Frenchman answered.

"I'm satisfied. What to do about Harkaway is puzzling my poor brain."

"You never told me what your designs were."

"We are old enemies. It is a blood feud. He killed my brother."

"With his own hand?"

"No, I don't say that, but they were always at enmity. He was the cause of his death."

"Why should I mix myself up in your affairs?"

"Do I ask you to do so?"

"*Moi!* I am your guide. What you call your hired servant."

"And I am very thankful to you for your valuable services!"

"I help you all I can. No bally nonsense. I am your *bon ami*. Do you want to kill ze man?"

"Sometimes I do, at others I do not. He is awfully rich. I could capture him and make him pay for his liberation. I could torture him with a lifelong captivity. What shall I do?"

"Let me tell you."

"I am listening. Every word you say, Alphonse, shall receive my strict attention."

"Let us make him a prisoner, rope him up in the Dervish's Temple, and get the old man to guard him."

"After that—"

"His friends will not know where he is. They will depart in despair if we manage ze scheme carefully," said Durand. "It can be done."

"Will it not be best to wait and follow him to Mecca?"

"That is for you to decide."

Hunston was perplexed, not knowing how to act.

"No," he said, after a pause. "I will corner him right here! He shall be in my power!"

"Make an end of it and have done with your feud. Ze shilly-shally is no good; be a man! Strike while the iron is hot!"

"I guess that is what I shall have to do."

"*Eh, bieu.* Now for sleep!"

Saying this, the Frenchman wrapped himself in a blanket.

Retiring to the tent, he threw himself on the dry ground and went to rest.

After smoking a cigar Hunston followed his example.

In the morning after coffee and biscuits, he and Durand took their camels and drivers to the fig grove.

Water they had from the rivulet in abundance. What a comfort it was, what a consolation.

The Dervish, Ben Hassan, had entirely recovered from his trance, and when they encountered him was on his knees engaged in his devotions.

They waited respectfully until he had finished, which was some while.

A Mahometan is long at his prayers, which take place at frequent intervals during the day.

"Father," said Hunston, when he rose and faced him, "I want the use of your temple for a time."

The Dervish shook his head.

"You cannot have it," he replied; "I am sorry to refuse you, but that is sacred to Allah."

"I must have it."

"What is your purpose?"

"My enemy Harkaway is coming here; I intend to make him a prisoner and confine him here."

"Would you shed his blood?"

"I should not be particular about it if the fit took me."

"This grove is sacred; no foul murder shall be done in it; I will tolerate no bloodshed."

"How about your own?"

The Arab sheik looked at him with reproach mingled with indignation.

"Go thy ways!" he cried, in a feeble treble. "For shame that you

should come here to disturb the peace and declining years of a poor broken down old recluse who has already got one foot in the gravel!"

"The sooner you are dead the better."

Hunston spoke brutally.

"Do I burden you that you should cast dirt on my beard? Have I fooled the stream that you drink from?"

"You are in my way, you foolish crank!"

"Begone! I only want this little part of the oasis in the desert. All the rest is at thy disposal. The wells, the figs and the dates," replied Ben Hassan.

"I want this temple and I mean to have it whether you like it or not."

The Dervish temporized.

"How know you that your foe Harkaway cometh in this direction?" he queried.

"You told me so yourself."

"How—when?"

The old man had no recollection of what he revealed in his trances. His was the power of second sight, but this remarkable gift had nothing to do with his waking senses.

This was done through his soul or spirit, apart from the faculties of animal matter and brain.

"When you were cataleptic you told me."

"What?"

"That Harkaway, his wife, three friends and five camels with drivers, were half a day's march from here. That they would arrive shortly."

"If I said so it is true, but I know nothing about it. My second self, my double speaks, not I."

The Dervish looked mystified.

"Get out of here," cried Hunston. "I want this place. If you don't hustle I'll make you!"

"I am here, and I stay."

With a reckless laugh Hunston shot at him with his revolver.

The bullet missed him.

Alarmed thoroughly, the old hermit ran into the jungle.

A second shot hit him, and he fell headlong.

Durand rushed forward. He crashed through the canes and looked at Ben Hassan.

The latter was stretched out motionless. He wore a shirt made of twisted or plaited grass, and this was stained with blood spots.

"Is he done for," shouted Hunston, "or does he require another dose of lead?"

"By gar! You shall have settle him. He has got his gruel this time," replied Durand.

"Serve him right. Throw some grass over him and let him lie."

This was promptly done.

The old Dervish was considered dead and out of the way.

Not for a moment did Hunston dread any further interference from him.

The camels had grazed to their heart's content. Their capacious stomachs were filled with water to repletion. The patient, long-enduring creatures knelt under the trees, chewing the cud.

Their drivers lounged about. They were in the habit of indulging in a vice.

This was chewing a peculiar drug or compound called Hasbush, which made them sleepy and dreamy, producing the effect of semi-intoxication.

Hunston and Durand, having dispossessed the miserable Dervish of his dwelling and as they thought of his life, sought a retreat in the temple.

As we have stated the ground floor contained only stores.

The hermit did not want to hibernate or go into winter quarters, for it was perpetual summer there.

He was not a dormouse, or a squirrel, a creature to lay up stores of food in a little underground cubby house, lined with moss and fur.

There was no necessity for that in a land of perpetual sunshine, with the thermometer seldom less than one hundred and thirty in the sun, Fahrenheit.

But the figs and the dates did not always hang on the trees.

They had their seasons, and these were twice a year.

He could depend on two crops. In the interim he had to provide for a living.

Hence the stores.

No rain ever fell in the desert. The water which created the oasis bubbled up from a subterranean spring, the winds had blown seeds there, germination produced growth.

Perhaps before the land became a desert, there had been abundant vegetation there.

It is said that the great Sahara was once an inland sea, with islands in it, well populated.

Going to the second floor of the temple, Hunston noticed another flight of stairs.

He ascended. It led to a small room, over which was a domed roof.

Scattered all over the floor were lumps of gold, some weighing over an ounce; they were hundreds in number.

This showed that the Dervish or some one who had preceded him, had found gold in the oasis and collected it.

"Gold," ejaculated Hunston, his eyes gloating over it; "we will annex that."

"If you don't I shall," said Durand; "all nations want it, so do individuals."

"It is the motive power of the world. We can't do much without it."

"How much do you expect to get out of Harkaway, eh?"

"A quarter of a million of dollars," answered Hunston, coolly. "I shall not let him go for less when I have once caught him; think of the money I have spent in hunting him about from one country to the other."

"Is that so?"

"I swear it, My word! I have been half over the world after him."

"What have you got for it?"

"Next to nothing," replied Hunston, surlily. "I robbed him once and made a stake, but since then I have been invariably beaten by the devil's own luck."

They quitted the chamber and again entered the grove.

One of the drivers had pitched the tent and spread out the lunch. There was a bottle of strong Persian wine and plenty of cold water.

First they had caviar, then gorgona anchovy, thirdly, ham and chicken, all taken from cans, biscuits and wine.

This was wonderful fare for the desert, but the tinned meats were hermetically sealed and the heat could not hurt the contents at all.

The camels carried everything. Lucullus dined with Epicurus in the Arabian desert.

One of the drivers who was of a more restless disposition than the others, had been for a stroll over the small territory in which they were placed.

He came back looking somewhat frightened.

His name was Iradi, a full-blooded Persian, and a strict follower of the prophet.

When Hunston shot the holy man Ben Hassan, sheik and Dervish, he was irritated.

The feeling grew upon him until he became enraged and was willing to fight with any one.

"Have you any news to communicate?" inquired Hunston, in an imperative tone.

"A caravan coming up the desert," replied Iradi. "Five camels, four men, one woman."

"Don't go near the wells! Don't show yourselves, any of you! Stay right here or I'll shoot you, and you will find it a queer deal all round!" cried Hunston.

"That's right," said Durand. "When you speak to ze Canaille and ze Sans Culottes, let it be plain."

"I mean to!"

"Let them sing ze Marsellaise to ze tune of ze Rogue's March."

Iradi looked vengefully at Hunston. The other two camel drivers remained silent and impassive.

It was no quarrel of theirs.

Why should they concern themselves in the matter?

Hunston had shot the Dervish. Perhaps he might shoot them on sight if they spoke a word.

"Allah be just to all of us," exclaimed Iradi. "I have served you as I engaged."

"Go on doing so," said Hunston.

"Have you any fault to find with me? Have I not done my duty for ten piastres a day, which sum is still due me?"

"If you would hold your infernal tongue——"

"I will not!"

"Then we must part."

"Where can I go unless I accompany you in the desert? No drink—no food."

"That is your lookout."

"Shall I stay here all my life?"

"What the deuce do I care! Who are you? What interest have I in your welfare?" demanded Hunston, callously. "If you died this minute I should not shed a tear."

"There is a curse on you," cried the Persian Iradi; "you slew the poor old sheik."

"It was his fault."

"The curse of the Aissa Honas will follow you, and it will be terrible in its effect."

"Look here," said Hunston, with all the disdain that a white man has for one of an inferior race. "You Mongolians, Tartars, or whatever you like to call yourselves, will soon find that the Caucasian is not played out."

"Take my warning, sahib, if you would not accept the old man's."

"Well, what is it?"

"You are nearer danger than you have any idea of," said Iradi; "when you insulted and destroyed the good sheik, Ben Hassan, you did wrong."

"I acted on my own impulse—of my free will—don't want a half-breed Persian to dictate to me."

"Listen to the words of wisdom; they are as dew to the parched grass; as the texts of the blessed Koran to the wounded soul, bowed down by weight of woe."

"Stop this sophistry; I have had enough of it; lie down beside your camel."

"I will not do so."

"Ha! this is rank mutiny."

"Call it what you like. I am independent of you. The world owes me a living."

"Look here!" said Hunston; "it will be best for you to drop it. I can't stand cheek from niggers."

"I discharge myself."

"If you keep on cutting up I'll send you after the sheik on a Hourri hunt in the happy hunting grounds."

Iradi looked—he glared. Finally he rushed at Hunston with a knife.

"*Qui vive!*" cried Durand. "*Sauve qui peut!* he is running amok like a mad Malay. This will be your Sedan—your Waterloo!"

He ran behind a tree.

Hunston did not flinch nor give an inch. He saw the man coming, and was prepared for him.

Travelers in the East are very careful not to let their servants have fire-arms.

In case of insubordination or mutiny they might be used with fatal effect.

The muzzle of a revolver staring Iradi in the face brought him to a halt.

He was confronting death.

"Halt or you are a dead man!" cried Hunston.

The fellow's rage calmed down as soon as it had arisen almost.

It was an effervescence, a craze of the brain, a fanatical frenzy.

"Pardon," said he, salaaming.

"You are forgiven," replied Hunston. "I want no words—no conflict with you."

"How can I thank you, sahib?"

"By attending to your duty and saying no more."

Iradi moved away and threw himself down under a fig tree.

Hunston drank a glass of wine.

"I don't like that chap's look for a cent," he remarked; "and it occurs to me that I have been too lenient with him."

"So I think," replied Durand. "There is no fool like ze generous one."

"What do you imply?"

"If you not cut his throat, by gar, he cut yours."

"I am afraid that remark of yours is painfully true. Can two men drive three camels?"

"They can, but that's not the proper allowance."

"Will the others kick?"

"They can't; without you they would starve."

"All right; here goes. This fellow Iradi shall join the majority, anyway."

The Persian had fallen into a doze, or had pretended to do so. His eyes were closed.

Without a word of warning, Hunston sent him from life into eternity.

He was a dead shot.

The aim was for the brain, and it was successful.

A bullet crashed into it.

Iradi was a corpse.

"Bravo!" cried Durand. "You know how to keep discipline in your camp."

"I should be a fool if I did not," replied Hunston.

"You have not lived all your years for nothing. Ah! It is a pleasure to voyage with a man like you. With ze natives you have to be firm or they do nothing for you."

There was sound philosophy in this doctrine. It did not appear as if Iradi would do anything for anybody in this world.

The other drivers were too frightened to make any protest.

They looked at their dead comrade, and that was all.

Who's turn would it be next?

That was the question they put to themselves.

Hunston looked at his watch, finding that it wanted only an hour to noon.

"Harkaway cannot be far off," he observed. "We must keep a sharp lookout, my Alphonse. If it comes to a struggle, you will not fail me?"

"My heart's blood is at your disposal," replied the generous Frenchman.

He meant what he said.

Hunston knew that he could rely upon him as an ally in the hour of need.

"I shall go out presently," continued Durand; "and what you call reconnoiter. That is, find out all about ze enemy. How many he is and where he rendezvous. Oh, yes! I find out all. *Comprenney?*"

"Suppose we drag the body of Iradi further into the jungle?" observed Hunston.

"Ah, good! You are like me. I never care to look at a man after I have killed him, however much I may have hated him when alive!"

"It is not pleasant to contemplate a victim."

"What you think he telling his tale to ze angels at Heaven's gate, making it hot for you?"

"Very probably," returned Hunston, "although he is more likely to go to the other gate. Way down in the scheme of creation."

"To——"

"Don't mention it," interrupted Hunston; "I know my room is kept somewhere. Not in the temperate zone!"

"In ze tropics?"

"There are some subjects I avoid. I never liked to read 'Milton's Paradise Lost' beautiful as it is. I dislike 'Dante's Inferno,' although it is so weirdly clever and I cannot attach myself to Goethe's 'Faust'. Heaven! Hades! Well, well! I have friends in both places. Let us abandon metaphysics and come to business."

They took away the body of Iradi and cast it into a swampy spot. As they returned to the temple they covered the ground where Ben Hassan had been thrown.

"Where is the sheik?" asked Hunston.

The body was nowhere to be seen.

Grass which had been thrown over him was there, faded and wilted.

With this wild flowers were mingled, but the heat had caught them and their splendor had departed.

"That is a funny thing," exclaimed Hunston; "where has the old mummy gone?"

"We left him here, *ma foi*. Yes," replied Durand. "See! *voilà!* the blood on the grass!"

There were the spots, the stains. What more was wanting to identify the locality?"

But the mortal remains of the Dervish, Ben Hassan were not there. Where had they gone?

It was a perplexing question, which the two onlookers could not answer.

There were no wild animals to devour him. If there had been they would have left the bones of the skeleton. No birds of prey hovered in the air, such as vultures and buzzards.

What had become of the sheik?

Hunston went back to the tent. The Frenchman followed him after a little more exploration, which resulted in nothing. What a picture for an artist it was!

The three camels on their knees. The two drivers enjoying the sweet 'nothing to do.' The white men in the tent, the rippling stream, the shady grove.

"I will look out for Harkaway," exclaimed Hunston; "he will be sure to explore the locality."

"Is that his adventurous disposition?" inquired Durand.

"To a dot. He cannot rest or let anything alone."

"If you find him——"

"I shall knock him on the head and bring him here."

"But suppose that you get ze knock? What then? It is always difficult to tell how these things turn out, by gar!"

"Trust me to look after myself!"

"You one ver' good judge, from what I see," remarked Durand. "Shall I go into ze second chamber of ze temple and get it ready for your foe?"

"Yes; take some of the camel's cord—we shall want to tie him up."

"I will do it all. Ha! Ha! We have some fun with this Harkaway, but——"

A frown came over the Frenchman's face.

"What ails you?" asked Hunston. "You look as if you had lost a quarter and found a dime. Do you apprehend any danger?"

"I am not thinking about personal considerations," Durand answered. "The fact is, that old Dervish, Ben Hassan, is haunting my mind."

"Perhaps Old Nick has flown away with him. Such things were heard of in the middle ages."

"Remember we are only now emerging from barbarism. What has the last fifty years done for us? Steam, ze electric power, the——"

"That will do," interrupted Hunston. "Have we got the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life?"

"Non. We cannot transmit base metals into gold. Nor can we prolong our lives beyond the allotted span. *Vive la bagatelle!*"

"You are right. Here to-day, gone to-morrow. All flesh is grass. I have heard that kind of rot before. Go and prepare Young Jack Harkaway's reception room for him, and I will be the spider to lure the fly into the web."

They parted.

Alphonse Durand, the guide, went to the temple.

Hunston crept through the jungle to the wells.

The question which embarrassed both of them was this: What had become of the Dervish?

It was a very important question, because it might portend mischief to both of them.

To the belief of Hunston and Durand, the man had been dead from ten o'clock that day.

It was now past noon.

Who could solve the mystery?

### CHAPTER III.

YOUNG JACK ARRIVES AT THE OASIS—WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS.

THE Dervish, Ben Hassan, Hadji and sheik of Mecca, the holy city, had in his second sight trance truly stated that Young Jack and his party were in the desert and within a short distance of the oasis.

At midday they reached the wells, after considerable fatigue and suffering.

They camped just as Hunston had done.

It was the same with them and had been for centuries with thousands of pilgrims and travelers.

"We will stop here and rest for a week," said Young Jack. "There is no hurry to reach Mecca that I know of."

"Mahomet's coffin, which is suspended between earth and Heaven, will not go higher or lower," remarked Harry Girdwood.

"The laws of gravitation must be considered," observed Mole.

"For instance, water always finds its level."

"So do you, Massa Mole," said Monday.

"Do you insinuate? Explain?"

"When you're drunk you change the perpendicular for the horizontal."

Big words these for Monday, but he delivered them properly, and what is more, he knew the meaning of them.

"I request you to hold your tongue," cried Mole, "or I shall be under the painful necessity of compelling you to do so."

"That's more than you know how, sah."

"I rather think, my sable friend, that I have educated you up to a certain standard."

"Turn it the other way. I have made a man of you! Yah! Yah!"

Mole moved away in a huff.

"Go on," cried Monday. "Play checkers. Make a move. Shoot de coop. When an argument is not to be answered—tro!"

The learned professor paid no heed to the important remarks of Monday.

He gritted his teeth, he inspected the camels, the drivers, and the wells, sampling the water with some brandy he had in a flask.

Presently Clara and Monday came along with a kodak or demon camera.

Wherever she went, Clara was fond of taking views of attractive scenery and places.

Monday was her constant attendant, assisting her in every possible way.

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood remained in their tent, smoking cigarettes and sipping brandy and water.

Their camels were well laden, and if they could not command all the delicacies of the season, as people say in cities, they had comforts as well as necessities.

"We may hope to reach Mecca in two weeks at the latest," exclaimed Jack. "I have a letter of introduction to the sultan, and we shall see a place rarely visited except by Mahometan pilgrims, but that is not the magnet that draws me there."

"What then?"

"I have not told you before. I will now, in this tent, in the seclusion of this oasis. Before we left Teheran, the capital of Persia, I received a letter from Hunston, my foe."

"What did he say?"

"Just this. I hear that you are going to Arabia, where you expect to see something more wonderful than you have ever seen before. I will meet you in Mecca."

"Do you believe he meant it?"

"Why should he make an idle threat? He is not, as you know, the sort of man to do that."

"No. You are right so far. Hunston does not bark unless he can bite. I will give him credit for possessing some grit. We must prepare to meet him."

Young Jack smiled sarcastically.

"You pretend to know the man," he said, "and have sized him up, and yet you don't know him half as well as I do."

"How so?"

"Let me inform you. Hunston keeps in the background. We shall never see him or know where he is, yet the band plays on."

"You mean he will hit in the dark," said Harry.

"Why certainly. We shall meet in Mecca."

"What does that signify? Not that we meet as friends. That is impossible. Hunston intends to strike a blow."

"It is difficult and embarrassing, I will admit!" exclaimed Harry.

"So much so," replied Jack, "that as I have said before, I shall never have any peace so long as he lives."

"Shoot him on sight!"

"I can't do that. It would be murder," Jack answered.

"What! Conscientious scruples?"

"I can't help it. In fair fight I wouldn't care, but I have made up my mind to go to Mecca to call down his bluff. At any moment we might meet him. Perhaps he is on this oasis now."

Harry Girdwood laughed.

"My dear Jack," he said, "you are getting too highly imaginative. Is it at all likely that Hunston is on the strip of land, so narrow and out of the way?"

"I mean to take a stroll round. When I come back I may have something to tell you which will enlighten your darkness. No one will be more pleased than I shall of that, rest assured."

Harry was tired. He did not offer to accompany his friend, because he was far from thinking that any danger menaced him in such a lonely place.

Jack soon disappeared under the trees, and Harry smoked in peace.

They were both over confident. This is not a disadvantage sometimes, but it should always be accompanied with prudence.

Although walking was difficult, owing to the entanglements, Jack enjoyed the cool, refreshing spot very much.

After traversing miles of sandy waste, the green leaves and the grass were very grateful to the weary wayfarer.

A fig tree attracted his attention. He plucked the ripe fruit and thought of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden.

Well, perhaps there was something opposite in the connection.

A serpent was close to him in this little paradise, and it took the form of Hunston.

"How nice these figs are," said Jack to himself; "I could eat a bushel of them."

He over estimated his capacity, but he was not put to the test.

Hunston had been watching him and creeping up through the long grass. He felled him to the earth with a thick stick.

The blow, however, did not incapacitate Jack, who contrived to seize his antagonist by the leg.

Exercising all his strength, he gave a vigorous pull and brought Hunston on a level with himself.

Then a struggle began. They rolled over one another, each trying to gain the advantage.

At last Young Jack was successful.

He forced Hunston flat on his back and put his right foot with a stamp on his chest.

At the same moment the muzzle of a revolver threatened him.

"So," exclaimed Jack, "the snake in the grass is here! I had been thinking and talking about you! Now, what is your object in persecuting me?"

"I have none," replied Hunston. "I am going to the coast. So are you. We happen to meet on the same oasis. That is all."

"You wrote me a threatening letter in Teheran."

"Not I. You are mistaken. I swear it!"

"If your intentions are friendly, why did you knock me down with a baton just now?"

"I mistook you for somebody else."

Hunston's excuses and evasions had no effect upon Young Jack, who did not credit a word he said.

"Liar, thing, villain and murderer. Your subterfuges will avail you nothing with me," exclaimed Jack. "You have come to the end of your tether. Your last hour is approaching."

"Isn't it cowardly to shoot a man at your mercy lying at your feet, unable to defend yourself," said Hunston.

He was trying to work on Harkaway's sympathies.

Knowing the grandeur of his whole souled character.

"You," he continued, "have always posed as a Bayard, a knight without fear and without reproach. To kill me would be foul murder."

"I do not regard you as a man."

"Why not? What is the difference in our anatomy, are we not made alike?"

"You have degenerated. I shall kill you as I would a poisonous reptile, or a wild beast, for I hold that you are an enemy of the human race."

Hunston was driven to his wit's ends.

He heaved a sigh of despair.

But his luck had not yet deserted him altogether.

Just as Jack was about to pull the trigger and despatch Hunston to the other world, something intervened in the victim's favor.

Durand had arranged everything for Young Jack's reception in the temple, and this being accomplished, he strolled out in search of his friend.

Hunston thought that this might be the case, or that the Frenchman was within reach of his voice.

As a last desperate resource he shouted.

"*A moi! Au secours!*" rang out on the still air.

Durand was close by.

He darted forward.

Jack's pistol exploded, but it went wide of the mark, and the next instant he was knocked down by a rock wielded by the Frenchman.

His arms were bound in quick time.

Bleeding and confused, he looked up, marveling at the turn affairs had taken.

First Hunston had him in his power. Then he was in the ascendant, and thirdly, he was again at the mercy of his enemy.

This was a tantalizing kind of warfare.

To add to the weirdness of the scene, a tall figure glided by, wearing a blood-stained garment.

It looked reproachfully at Hunston, and disappeared in the bracken.

They recognized it as the shade of the sheik, Ben Hassan.

Had it come as a warning and a menace?

Their sudden pallor indicated as much.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Hunston, "is that the ghost of the Dervish?"

"It look ver moch like it," replied Durand.

"I wish I had shot at it."

"Bah! it was all spectral vapor. You waste powder and shot when you shoot at ze air."

"I don't like this apparition."

"It is best to leave these holy men alone. No good comes of offending them."

"I am tired of this mysterious resting place on the desert."

"Why not get away?"

"I intend to do so to-morrow. It is getting late now, and recent events have tired me."

"What you do with this man, Hark'ray?" inquired Durand.

This was a perplexing question.

Hunston had imbibed a peculiar idea lately.

At first he was all for putting Jack out of the way.

Since then another idea had entered his head, he had a greed for gold!

Young Jack's adventures had enriched him, and Hunston's desire was to get all he could out of him.

He pictured himself a millionaire, living in a land of plenty and luxury.

Making a sign to Durand, he forced Young Jack on his feet and conducted him to the temple.

The upper room was prepared for him. A stone weighing nearly a hundred weight was on the floor.

To it was attached a thick cord.

The latter was made fast to the prisoner's leg, and Young Jack could not get away without assistance.

"Here is your resting place for a time!" exclaimed Hunston; "I will see what I can do with you presently. You were not going to spare my life, why should I spare yours? At all events, I will reflect."

Young Jack made no answer.

He was supremely disdainful, and looked as if the proceedings did not interest him in the slightest degree.

Hunston and Durand left him by himself.

When they were outside they reflected.

"What are you going to do," asked Durand, when they sat down in the grove.

"I can't tell for a time. If Harkaway will pay my price he can live."

"Shall I go and speak to him?"

"You can if you like, but I do not suppose it will be satisfactory. At all events you can talk to him."

"How much do you want if you let him go and join his friends at the wells?"

"Half a million of dollars; nothing less."

"Are you a financier?" asked Durand. "Do you know anything about business? I think not. Suppose Harkaway promised you a million?"

"Well?"

"Imagine that he gave you a draft on some banker for that amount, is it at all probable that it would be paid? You must be indentified. Money extorted by threats is blackmail."

"That is so. I am a fool," replied Hunston. "Thank you for reminding me of the fact."

"I don't call you foolish. Far from it. You have *beaucoup* of intelligence, but you not know everything."

"Why should I pretend to do so—I know I am fallible. Go and shoot the cub right away! There will be an end of it!"

"But so," answered Durand.

He went to the temple. The day was drawing to a close. All was still as death.

Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves or the blades of grass.

Durand went slowly. He looked around. The camels were resting. The two drivers were sitting around as usual.

There was a fierce look of determination in the eyes of the Frenchman.

The shades of night fell fast.

There was little or no twilight.

When he reached the prison chamber, he saw in the gloom the form of Jack reclining on a bed of hay in a corner.

Durand advanced to him with a knife in his hand. There was murder in his eyes.

"Die!" he hissed. "Your time has come! *Mon Garçon, go! Fly! Nantez! En haut with you!*"

He was about to strike.

Young Jack did not move.

He heard nothing, for he was fast asleep.

At that critical juncture in the fate of Young Jack, a power intervened.

The spirit of the Sheik, Ben Hassan, appeared between Durand and Harkaway.

His arm was uplifted threateningly.

"The ghost—the ghost!" yelled Durand.

He was terribly alarmed.

Rushing toward the stairs, he lost his balance and fell backwards.

When he reached the bottom he was unconscious.

Young Jack had escaped from a horrible death in the most wonderful manner.

The noise of Durand's fall had awakened Young Jack, who scarcely realized the situation he was in.

His head was bruised, and his senses not too clear.

"Where am I?" he gasped.

The shade of the Dervish bent over him.

"Who are you?" gasped Jack.

"Your friend," was the reply. "I am the Sheik of the desert. Much have I to tell you, but we must get away from here."

Ben Hassan was not dead.

He was no ghost.

Giving Jack his hand, the old man helped him up, cut the cords that bound him to the stone, and led him down the stairs.

They passed Durand's body. They went out into the night and eluded Hunston.

In a few minutes they were at the wells.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE HOLY CITY OF MECCA—PRIESTLY INTRIGUES—THE SULTAN'S TREACHERY.

THE old Sheik, Ben Hassan, had no sooner liberated Young Jack, than he showed him the way to the wells, where his friends were, and explained some things which were a mystery to our hero.

In fact, he told him nearly the same story he had related to Hunston.

There was one addition, however.

He knew that Hunston and Durand believed him dead. He was shot and injured slightly, the ball having struck against a small gold jewel, which he wore near his breast, suspended by a hair round his neck.

This was a talisman given to him by the high priest of the Mosque Sophia in Mecca.

His name was Feroze.

The talisman was considered to be a very holy relic, it being supposed to belong at one time to King Darius.

When he got a chance, Hadji Ben Hassan got up, and sought a place of concealment.

What Hunston took for a ghost was the sheik in person.

All was still at the wells. Clara was reclining in her tent, Harry

had gone to sleep under a tree, Mole and Monday were playing cards.

"Take this talisman," said Ben Hassan, kindly. "It has done me more than one service since it has been in my possession."

"Thank you," replied Jack, "but I do not like to deprive you of so valuable a piece of property."

"My years are numbered. It is too precious to be left in this desert spot where my bones will bleach."

"What virtues do you attach to it?"

"Personal safety, friendship and health."

"Since you are kind enough to press its acceptance on me, I will receive it."

"You are welcome, my son. On your arrival in Mecca proceed to the holy Kaiaba, in which is the coffin of the holy prophet, Mahomet."

"Who shall I see there?" inquired Jack.

"Ask for Feroze, the head sheik, who has his residence there. He is a friend of mine, and will do all in his power to protect and aid you if you mention my name and show him the talisman."

With these words Ben Hassan presented him with the charm.

Jack expressed his gratitude in appropriate terms.

"Let me warn you against a priest named Mordecai," continued Ben Hassan.

"Is he dangerous?"

"He will be to you if he knows you have the talisman, which has the word 'oromanes' graven on it."

"Why is that?"

"He has sworn to possess that amulet, and will risk anything to obtain it."

"From me he shall never extract it."

"That is all I have to say. If pursued by your foe, Hunston, be brave."

"Do not doubt it," replied Jack, smiling. "But the tables will be turned soon."

"How?"

"I am going to attack him now, he has defied all laws, I will shoot him down like a wild beast."

"That is your business. I cannot help you in shedding blood, my son. Farewell. I shall conceal myself until you are all gone."

They shook hands and the aged man disappeared in the tangled thicket.

Waking Harry Girdwood up, Jack informed him of what had happened.

"This must be attended to," said Harry. "I should take the law into my own hands, it is time to put a stop to this sort of thing."

"I am of the same opinion," replied Jack. "Will you come with me?"

"Certainly. I reckon we two will be a match for Hunston and his guide."

"Camel drivers won't fight. Monday is too short sighted to fire straight and Mole funks."

"Come on. We'll chance it."

"Who's afraid?"

They advanced, pistol in hand, to the spot where they had expected to find the enemy.

The grove was deserted.

On the threshold of the temple stood the Dervish.

"Allah has thought fit to warn your foe of your approach. When I came here I found them gone!" he exclaimed.

"In what direction?" asked Jack.

"Westerly, if I may judge by the imprints of the camel's feet."

"Confound it," cried Jack.

"Escaped again?" growled Harry Girdwood: "they must have taken alarm when they found you were gone."

"They have a start."

"Yet they may be overtaken, though I have an idea that we shall not see them again until we meet in Mecca."

At this moment a pistol was fired from behind a screen of vines.

The bullet whizzed past the young men without doing them any injury.

Instantly they returned the fire.

They were not again molested.

"Forward!" cried Jack; "unearth the rat."

"Down with him," said Harry. "It was a cowardly ambush of Hunston's."

"No one else could have done it."

They rushed into the jungle-like growth, firing at random as they went along.

No one was to be seen.

After firing the shot the would-be assassin, whoever he was, had decamped.

They returned disappointed, but congratulating themselves at being safe.

"Where is the old man?" queried Jack.

The Dervish was nowhere to be seen.

"What can have become of him?" said Harry. "He was here all right a moment ago."

They made a search for him, and inside the temple they found him weltering in his blood.

The Dervish had been assassinated and shot to death by some one who used a pistol.

There was a gaping wound in his chest, and moreover the lung was affected.

"Hassan, my good friend, who has done this?" inquired Jack.

"Your foe," was the reply. "He was hiding, waiting, watching."

"Was the shot meant for you?"

"I think not. You were to be the victim, but his hand trembled. The bullet flew wide and found a billet in my body. I had kept possession of the talisman that could not have happened."

Jack smiled.

He had little faith in predestination or charms.

These things amounted in his mind to the greatest summit of superstition and credulity.

Young Jack Harkaway believed in being true to himself, and doing his duty all the time.

The mother, the bible, the school tells you all you have to do to get on in this world.

Be true to yourself if you want to get on.

"Are you dying? Cannot I do something to help you?" Jack asked, kindly.

"No. The sand is running out of my glass."

Young Jack was agitated, excited, restless.

"Can you see anything?" he asked. "You say you have the gift of second sight. Why not exercise it in my behalf?"

"Not now. I have lost the talisman. My power is gone. I can—see—nothing. Allah—beckons me."

Ben Hassan's eyes were glazed. All the little luster that age had left him had gone out.

A painful pause ensued.

Jack and Harry gazed upon him in a compassionate manner.

But they were powerless to help the unfortunate man.

He had received his death blow.

Suddenly he sprang up, leaning on his elbow.

"Yes, yes!" he said; "I have a spiritual sense only at present. I can see the gates of Paradise being opened to me."

"Where is your passport?" asked Harry, rather irreverently. "Has it been seen and vized according to law?"

"My past life has atoned for all. If I have sinned I have suffered, and through suffering comes redemption."

"So long as you are satisfied I am."

The Dervish did not last long.

He quickly passed away, to all intents and purposes peacefully.

Jack and Harry left him as he was. They had neither the means nor the opportunity to bury him.

Decent sepulture was out of the question.

It was a case of emergency when every one has to look out for himself.

"The old fakir is dead at last," remarked Jack; "peace be to his ashes."

"He deserved a better fate," replied Harry.

"Don't be so sure of that. He made his future by committing his sin."

"You mean to say he killed his man. To avoid the capital punishment for murder he came here to hide during the rest of his existence."

"Yes; and not a bad idea, too. He lived in this beautiful place, having nothing to do."

"Remorse."

"He didn't feel that. He was fanatical enough to have the consolation of religion. But let me tell you one thing."

"I am listening," replied Harry.

"The sheik gave me his talisman; it is a bringer of good luck. We want some now Hunston is on the war path again. He has told me to show it to Feroze, the high priest of Mecca. It will make him a friend, at the same time I am to avoid another priest of the Mosque of Sophia."

"Who is he?"

"Mordecai, the deadly foe of Ben Hassan. He covets this talisman."

"We must cultivate Feroze and be distantly civil to Mordecai, if we meet him."

"That is so. Let us return to our camels and party. After sundown we will proceed on our journey to Mecca."

As they were going away Harry picked up a small pocketbook or wallet which was lying on the ground.

The name of Hunston stamped on it in gold showed that it belonged to that person.

He had dropped it in his hurried flight.

Perhaps the contents were valuable, or if not so, of an interesting nature.

"Here's a find!" cried Harry.

"Finding's keeping," said Jack.

"Not in the eye of the law, but there is an absence of that commodity here."

"Open it."

Harry Girdwood did so amidst much excitement and expectation on the part of his friend and himself.

In it were some drafts on a bank in Mecca and a letter of introduction.

It was written in Arabic.

Strange to say it was addressed to Mordecai, sheik of Mosque Sophia, Mecca.

They did not hesitate to read it.

In doing so they were not committing a great liberty, and the saying is this:

Everything is fair in love and war.

They were at war.

If they did not get the best of Hunston he would of them.

Self preservation is the first law of nature.

If they could succeed, Hunston would have to go first, whatever happened afterwards.

The letter was written by a prominent merchant in Teheran, who traded with Mecca.

He recommended his good friend Hunston to his kind consideration and said that he would come on as soon as the next big caravan was ready to start for the East.

"This portends some kind of rough luck to us," remarked Frank.

"No doubt of it," answered Harry. "I feel it."

"Where?"

"If not in my bones, somewhere in my clothes."

"You have been told by the good old sheik who has just passed in his ten cent checks. You can't call them any better, for he was played out to the world, that Mordecai was and is his enemy to this day."

"Exactly. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be."

"War without end," supplemented Harry Girdwood.

"There is a truce at present," observed Jack. "We will take all the advantage we can of it. They have gone away from here."

"What do you mean?"

"Hunston and the Frenchman, whom we have heard of as his guide."

"These people must be subdued in some way."

"In Mecca we shall meet them. Our friend is the High Priest, Feroze."

"The former owner of the talisman—"

"Given you by Ben Hassan?"

"Yes, it is mine now and may be of immense use to us presently."

"I hope so."

"Of course, Feroze will be our friend; Mordecai our foe. It is to fight Hunston and Mordecai."

"You have mapped out the situation precisely."

There was no further fighting; the friends searched all round within a radius of a half a mile to find a trace of Hunston.

None could be discovered.

The recluse was right in his assertion.

Hunston and Alphonse Durand had got away with their camels, some little time before Jack could follow them.

In fact, he didn't intend to hurry.

Fighting in the sandy desert would be of no service to him; the real battle would be fought out in Mecca.

Returning to the wells they ordered the drivers to get ready for the march.

Clara was prepared, but Mr. Mole and Monday showed an inclination to linger.

"It is something awful," said Mole, "to tramp with a wooden leg through this sand. If you want to find a dead Mole in the desert say so, and prepare a paving stone with an inscription."

"What shall it be, sir?" asked Jack.

"Isaac Mole, age of birth, and death uncertain, let him repose in peace."

"N. B.—This notice is specially directed to jackals, vultures and red ants.

"P. S.—Give his clothes to the deserving poor and his wooden leg to a veteran—if there is one left—of the Grand Army of the Republic, Potomac Post 74. All quiet along the line.

"Isaac Mole, G. A. R."

Jack considered.

"It is rather hard on you, and I may add on my wife, to have to trudge through the sand," he remarked.

"A driver told me," replied Mole, "that in places outside the oasis where the welling water subsides there are quicksands."

"What of that?"

"Just this, my dear boy; if you, I, or a camel were to strike one of these shifting sands, down we should go and the probability is, we should be seen no more."

"If you were lost, would it be a great loss?"

"Irreparable," said Mole. "I am a shining light in my generation. You could not replace me. I pity the world when I am gone."

"There is one camel nearly unloaded. The few bags she carries can be transferred to another. You can ride between the humps."

"Thanks very much."

"I have heard that camel riding is not very pleasant and requires lots of patience with unlimited wash leather."

"What's that?"

"Call it soft saddle."

Clara wore a bloomer costume. She declared she would rather walk than ride on a camel.

The beast with the multiple humps had no charm or attraction for her.

After some hesitation Mole consented to ride on the camel.

He prepared himself for the event.

There was a chance of his slipping over the side if he did not hold tight.

An Englishman and an American rides with his knees pressed on the sides of the horse, a Frenchman puts his heels under the belly and hangs on by the mane.

No finer riders in the world are to be found than the Anglo Saxon race.

With a little assistance, Mole straddled the camel and the party left the wells.

The procession went as follows.

Jack and Harry Girdwood led the van, then came the camels and the drivers. In the rear were Clara and Monday.

The once prince of Limbi was greatly attached to his young mistress. He would have died for her at any moment.

Mole was in the middle of the caravan, and he did not feel too comfortable.

Camel riding was not his strong suit.

"Don't go so fast," he said to his driver.

"What is that? I have not much English," was the reply.

"Bless you," continued Mole. "May Mahomet and all the rest of your false prophets of Khoranan, veiled or unveiled—cus—I mean bless you."

"Sahib!"

"If there is one race I like better than another—and I have traveled some, it is a cross breed between an Arab and a Persian."

"That's me," said the man.

"I know it is, haven't I described you exactly; but I spoke sarcastically."

"What you mean, effendi?"

"That is better. I am an effendi, a Bey, a shah, a man who can have you bowstrung, tomahawked or pole-axed in five minutes."

The camel driver crouched.

"What do you want your slave to do?" he asked.

"Drop to the rear. I want to get off this camel trolley car and enjoy myself."

As he spoke the camel struck a small stretch of very treacherous land.

There was a quicksand underneath.

Without any warning down went the camel with Mole on the top, up to his hips.

"Help, help!" shouted Mole. "I am going to Kingdom Come. Will no one save me. These are the shifting sands, I am stranded on the sands of time and threatened to be engulfed."

Young Jack heard his exclamation, and turning his head, saw the plight he was in.

The camel was rapidly disappearing.

So was Professor Mole.

With a run he came up to the spot.

Mr. Mole threw himself from the camel and fell into Jack's arms.

"Saved!" he said. "I was on the ragged edge—on the verge of perdition. Jack, you are my friend—my dear, good old friend."

"I hope so, sir. You know I have always tried to be on the very best terms with you. Are you all right?"

"Right as the bank—fit to fight for a man's life. I'm backing the winner all the time."

The unfortunate driver endeavored to save the camel from destruction, but could not.

He was drawn into the same calamity.

Both of them sank into the miry quicksands and rapidly disappeared.

Mole was gratified—deeply so.

"It is a pity to lose a camel," he remarked, "and also a sorrow to be deprived of the services of a driver; but what is the use of a driver without a camel? He is what the French, during the siege of Paris by the Germans, called a useless mouth. We will not weep over him—it would be a useless waste of tears."

No answer was made.

The caravan went on, plodding over the sand, which reflected the heat of the sun.

It was a weary journey, but before night they came into a well cultivated country, where villages were abundant.

They contained friendly Arabs, who for a small sum of money, gave them all the supplies they required.

Camping comfortably, they proceeded the next day on the road to Mecca.

Five days' journey brought the party to the holy city.

There was nothing very imposing about its appearance, for it was not so grand as Jerusalem, its rival.

The streets were narrow and dirty.

All the country was marshy and full of malaria.

Mecca contains the coffin of Mahomet. Jerusalem has the tomb of Christ.

Of the two cities, Jerusalem is the best to inhabit.

There were plenty of caravanserais or hotels where the pilgrims and merchants stayed.

The pilgrims, however, from all parts of the Mahometan world were the most numerous.

They came in ships down the Red Sea by thousands to visit and worship at the shrine of Mahomet.

Jack's first business was to go to the holy Kaiaba and ask to see Feroze.

An interview was accorded him.

Feroze in priestly robes received him in a large hall in which were many priests.

By the side of Feroze was Mordecai. Both were tall, swarthy men.

Their hair and beards were long and white.

Mordecai looked at Young Jack in a venomous manner when he heard his name.

It seemed to bode him no good.

The Mahometans hate the Christians and despise them.

Jack was a distinguished visitor.

In a moment he guessed that Hunston had arrived before him, and been in conversation with Mordecai.

"In the name of the prophet, welcome!" exclaimed Feroze. "What is your object in visiting our holy city?"

"I am traveling round the world," replied Jack, "and intend to write a book about celebrated places I have seen."

"A praiseworthy motive."

"Can I see the shrine of Mahomet, holy father?"

"That is a favor not generally accorded to heretics."

"I have a talisman with me which was given to me by the Sheik Ben Hassan."

"Ha! I thought the Hadji was dead."

"He is gathered to his fathers," answered Jack; "but the relic of Solomon, named oromanes, is in my possession."

"That is a passport to any part of the kaiava," exclaimed Feroze. "Let me see it."

Jack took it from his pocket and handed it to him. The high priest bowed his head, raised it to his lips, and kissed it reverently. Mordecai feasted his eyes upon it. He coveted the talisman more than anything in the whole world. Power and gold were not to be compared to it.

"Well do I remember giving this sacred talisman to Ben Hassan," continued Feroze. He returned the charm to Jack, who replaced it in his pocket. It had worked wonders so far.

Further conversation ensued. Feroze asked a variety of questions which were answered in a candid spirit.

"Mordecai," he said, "will show you the tomb of the prophet and the relics. We have everything worthy of notice connected with Mahomet, before and after the Hegira. Does not the Koran say that the relics of the great are gifts to posterity?"

"I know very little about the Koran," replied Jack.

"It is a holy book, more worthy of reading than the bible of the Christians."

"I cannot believe that."

"In a short time you may change your mind. You ought to become a Mahometan, Mr. Harkaway. You are well known through reporters who have put your exploits in print and paper. If we live in Arabia we know what is going on in the outside world."

"Telegraphs, printing offices and the post do the business," replied Jack.

"It is as difficult to convert Christians to Mahometanism as it is to do *vice versa*, but in the name of the prophet I trust you will join our faith."

Jack shook his head. He did not feel like becoming a Mahometan. The Christian religion was the one he had been brought up in, and no one could persuade him to change it.

"We shall meet later," said Feroze. "My colleague Mordecai will accompany you around the kaiaba."

"It will be my duty and delight," replied Mordecai. "Everything that is worthy of notice shall be at the Feringhee's disposal."

The word "Feringhee" signified a white man, but did not imply a title.

"Gaiour" is another word in the East for a follower of the Saviour.

Mordecai rose and Jack followed him, though not without a certain amount of misgiving. He had been duly warned that his guide was a friend of Hunston's. He also knew that he wanted to gain possession of King Solomon's talisman, called "oromanes."

Where he was going he had not the slightest idea. He was entirely in the hands of his conductor. His fate was in his hands for good or evil. They traversed a long corridor. At the extremity of this was a flight of stone steps. Down these they went. They were twenty in number. At the bottom there was another passage dimly lighted with small oil lamps. This led into a yard filled with shrubs and trees of a dark funereal color as regards their leaves. Beyond this was the tomb in which the coffin of Mahomet was contained. It was suspended from the roof of the vault, hanging half way between that and the floor. This arrangement gave birth to the story that the body of Mahomet is between earth and Heaven. Is this a Moslem idea of Purgatory? Having seen this he was taken to another vault, where he saw swords, spears, shields, banners and other things captured in battle. There was a retiring room. Into this Mordecai led Young Jack, inviting him to take some refreshment. It was already spread on a table, in a somber-looking apartment. There were cakes, biscuits dried fruit and sherbert. Jack helped himself. "Pretty good, tack," as the sailors say on board ship," he remarked. "It is as good as we can provide for strangers," Mordecai replied. "Do you treat your friends better?"

"Allah! We always do so; would you like to see?"

"Anything you can show me will be of interest."

"Come with me."

Mordecai rose and pointed to the left-hand corner.

"Look!" he added. An incandescent light suddenly appeared. It was of electric origin. Advancing, Mordecai pulled back a portiere, and entered another compartment. Young Jack was close at his heels. Directly they had crossed the threshold, a door was banged behind them. They found themselves in total darkness. "What is this?" asked Jack. Mordecai placed his hand on his shoulder. "You will see directly," he remarked. "The wish of all of us is to have light, light, more light." They waited patiently for a short time. Then lights were turned on, and they beheld an aged man sitting at a table. Jack shrank back with affright. Why did he do so? It was Hunston, the so-called avenger, and behind him was the guide, Alphonse Durand. Mordecai stood near the door as if he was constituted the inner guard. "I am glad, very glad to see you, Mr. Harkaway!" exclaimed Hunston. "My friend Durand I think you have met before." Young Jack nodded his head. "Excuse me," he replied, "if I did not recognize the gentleman at once."

"Don't apologize," said Durand. "It is not in the least necessary."

"I was not intending to do anything of the sort!" exclaimed Jack. "You cannot expect me to recollect the face of every scoundrel I meet in my travels."

"Ho! What?"

"Do you suppose I carry a rogues' gallery about with me in my pocket?"

There was a dread and ominous silence, which lasted for more than a minute. It was broken by Hunston. "I have become a Mahometan," he said, "through the saintly influence of Father Mordecai."

"He has changed his faith," remarked Mordecai. "Praise be to Allah!"

"In my opinion the man never had any to change," replied Jack. "He has always been an Agnostic."

"Let that pass," said Hunston. "You will have to do the same or be immersed in a dungeon for life."

"Who is dictating to me?"

"I am."

"By what authority?"

"That which I have given him," interposed Mordecai. "He acts as my deputy here in my absence."

"Beware! Do you know him?" cried Jack.

"He is an ally and a co-religionist. What more do I want to learn?"

"Very well. You know your business. I despise him and will not obey his orders!"

"They are mine in reality. Will you leave the cross for the crescent?"

"Never! Rather would I die the worst death you can inflict upon me!"

"Is that your decision?"

"Yes, unalterably; you will never move me!"

"Very well. Allah is good, and moves in a mysterious way. We will give you time to consider."

"What do you mean?"

"That you will find out. Either you must become a follower of Mahomet or be a lifelong prisoner in the dungeon cells of the Kaiaba."

"This is monstrous—unjust—inhuman!"

"It may be so in your opinion."

"I demand to be allowed to depart in peace as I came."

"That cannot be."

"Behold the talisman!"

Jack held up "oromanes." In a moment it was snatched from him. "Ha! Ha!" laughed Mordecai. "This is mine! I have wanted it for years, and, thanks be to Allah, I have obtained it!"

"Give that back!" cried Jack.

"Never!"

"You shall, by Heaven!" added Jack, who recovered it by a vigorous effort. The priest clapped his hands. Six masked men in black robes rushed from behind a velvet space. "Seize this man!" cried Mordecai. Before he had any time to offer any resistance Jack was disarmed and made a prisoner. "Away with him!" exclaimed Mordecai. Hunston was seen to smile. So far he had triumphed. Young Jack Harkaway was led through a narrow passage to a dungeon. It was lighted with oil lamps, two in number. A small table and a chair made of wicker work completed the furniture. "Here you will stay," said Mordecai.

"I have friends who will look after me. They know that I have come to the kaiaba."

"That is sacred to outsiders. Here you are and here you will stay."

"How long?"

"That depends. I cannot tell!"

"What are the considerations. Let me know something."

"In the first place I require the talisman of King Solomon named 'oramanes' said Mordecai.

"In that connection I may mention the name of Hunston, your friend. He has bribed you to ill-treat me."

"We will waive that."

"I want the talisman."

"Take it if you can get it. I will never surrender the jewel!"

"We will see."

"Come on. I am ready for you!" exclaimed Young Jack, who was willing to fight to the last gasp.

Brave as he was, the men in masks speedily overpowered him.

The talisman was taken away; he was bound hand and foot and thrown into a corner.

Then the men in the black masks stretched him on a pallet bed.

They strapped him so tightly that he could not stir in any limb.

Over his head was a receptacle for water, which extended from a small point, drop after drop.

These drops fell at a rate of about forty to the minute on Jack's forehead.

Drop—drop!

The sensation at first was not unpleasant.

After a while it became monotonous.

In an hour it became painful.

The optic nerves were affected. The brain was touched, and it became a torture.

Mordecai looked on with his arms folded.

His eyes were cold as steel.

The men in the masks were ranged against the wall.

Looking over Jack were Hunston, Durand and the priest Mordecai.

They seemed to gloat over his misery.

"I say," cried Jack; "how long is this thing to keep on?"

"Until you speak," replied Mordecai.

"To what purpose?"

"In the first place you must consent to be a follower of the prophet," answered Mordecai.

"Secondly," said Hunston, "you are to give me a draft for half a million of dollars, on your banker in the city."

"If I refuse?"

"The water will continue to drip on your frontal bone until you become mad."

"And then?"

"Allah!" interrupted Mordecai, "is the man a fool? When he is mad he will go to the house for the insane people."

"Your answer," ejaculated Hunston.

"I have none to make, do what you like. I will not join your religion, I will not give you money. Keep on, it will not hurt me."

"We will leave you, perhaps you will come to your senses in a short time."

"Never according to your ideas."

"Then perish."

Mordecai beckoned to an attendant.

"Kassola," he exclaimed. "Stay here. Pay attention to the prisoner, if he wishes to see me, summon me at once."

"Yes, Effendi," replied Kassola.

He was a short, thick-set man about forty years of age.

His expression is best described by the word, hang-dog, for it was sullen and defiant.

Hunston, Mordecai and the masked inquisitors departed slowly.

Jack was alone with Kassola.

This man was a slave, bought and kept by the priests.

He hated his position.

It was ever in his mind to escape.

Kassola had a friend who came to Mecca occasionally.

They met and talked together.

This was Koosh, who owned a large sailing vessel with which he traded from port to port.

But he was more than a trader.

The fellow was in reality a pirate and all his crew were heart and soul in the piratical business.

Feroze, Mordecai and the other priests employed Kassola as a mere drudge.

He was a native of Suakin.

Young Jack was beginning to feel the torture of the falling water in an acute stage.

His brain seemed to be on fire.

Throb—throb—went his heart and the pulsation extended to his temples.

What would the end of it be?

Madness or death?

"Move me," he exclaimed, addressing Kassola. "I can't stand much more of this."

"What, you giving in?" asked the slave.

"If you want money, I will make your fortune."

"I can take you to friends of mine, they will be good and kind; you cannot be anyway safe here; priests will follow, sure to catch and kill. You got to pay them, just as well pay me."

"Anything you want."

"I take you to the sea, not far. A ship there, my friend captain," continued Kassola.

"Can I trust him?" asked Jack.

"Through me, he will be true."

"That's all I want, but for the Lord's sake stop this eternal drip—drip."

Kassola cut his bonds.

He was released.

"Thank Heaven! I am a free man once more!" cried Jack, stretching himself; "that torment was awful."

Kassola raised his hand warningly.

"Don't stop to talk," he whispered.

"All right, I forgot."

"Come. I leave. You following. Safe with me, you know we fly."

Young Jack put himself unreservedly in his hands.

He thought he could trust him.

But he did not know the Hadendowa Arabs to which tribe Kassola belonged.

They are brave to madness, but dreadfully treacherous and cunning.

"Your friend is a trader, I presume," said Jack.

"General merchant business."

"Good. I will make it worth his while to hide me. He can lay off the coast. I can send for my friends."

"Take you all on board."

"Let us get out of the kaiaba."

"Gently. Follow."

Saying this in a low tone, Kassola conducted him along several vaulted passages.

He was well acquainted with all parts of the holy kaiaba in which he had been for over a year.

At length they descended some steps.

This brought them into a yard.

A gate admitted them to the street and they walked along leisurely like ordinary citizens.

No one had seen them go, nobody followed them.

The priesthood were all powerful in Mecca.

Jack knew this.

His life would never be safe there, so long as Hunston and Mordecai worked together.

It was necessary to get out of it as soon as possible.

He fancied that when he got on board of Koosh's ship, which Kassola informed him was called the Catamaran, he would be safe.

This was a delusion.

Little did he dream that they were pirates.

"I will send for Harry Girdwood, Mole, Monday and my wife Clara," he said to himself, "and I will pay Koosh and reward this fellow."

While he was talking in this way Kassola was deliberating with himself.

"Rich white sahib man," he murmured, "priest Mordecai know that. Get him on pirate ship—make him pay down fine."

This meant that Jack was to be made a prisoner.

He no sooner got out of one trouble than he fell into another directly.

It was adventures all the time.

They made their way to the sea shore, and ere darkness set in were close to the spot where the pirate ship, Catamaran, was anchored.

A whistle from Kassola attracted the attention of those on board of her.

They lowered a boat.

Into it got Young Jack and Kassola. They were rowed to the ship.

Kassola left Jack standing on the deck among a small crowd of Arabs.

They were good sailors, but their faces were not greatly in their favor.

Each man looked as if he could cut a throat on the slightest provocation.

While he waited sail was set.

A breeze was blowing up the Red Sea.

The sun was declining in the west.

"Hang it all!" muttered Jack, "I wanted to send a message to Harry Girdwood. What the deuce do they want to start so soon for?"

Up went the anchor. Away sailed the ship.

While Jack was wondering what all this meant, Kassola returned with Koosh.

The pirate was a man of commanding stature and well built.

He had seen service as a coolie on board English ships.

He had served in the commissariat for England during the Sudan campaign.

By working and stealing, the fellow had amassed enough money to buy a ship and stores.

His crew consisted of the refuse and scum of Suakin.

"This is the great traveler and explorer, Harkaway," exclaimed Kassola.

"What does he want?" asked Koosh.

"To join your crew. His ambition is to be a pirate."

Jack looked amazed.

"Confound you!" he cried; "why do you invent such falsehoods?"

The pirate drew himself up to his full height.

"I am Koosh, the pirate!" he exclaimed. "If you will not sail

and work with me, you must be my prisoner until you pay a heavy ransom."

"Am I strapped again?"

"Make the best of it or you will go below and stay there."

Jack was silent.

Inwardly he was turning over in his mind what would be the best plan to adopt.

They were now rapidly leaving the shore, and night was settling down.

Young Jack Harkaway had become seriously alarmed.

He saw that whatever step he proposed to take, must be taken quickly.

There was no time to talk about it—none to waste in idle regrets.

"I've got to swim for it, that's all," thought Jack, and with one leap he sprang into the sea.

Of course there was a great shouting and tumbling around on board the ship.

"We put back to shore if we don't find him," Koosh immediately determined, for he was not yet really ready to sail, unless some special inducement was offered.

Of course, they took every means to find Young Jack.

But after half an hour they had seen nothing of him.

Kassola was wild with rage and chagrin.

But Captain Koosh took it very philosophically.

"There is only Allah and Mahomet is his prophet," he exclaimed. "If the dog of a gaiour is drowned can I help it? No! We will return and I will finish my préparations for my cruise."

Meanwhile what had become of Young Jack?

It is hardly to be supposed that so good a swimmer could be drowned outright.

Kassola's fear was that a shark had swallowed him.

This came very near the truth.

When Jack went down into the water he expected trouble, and was fully prepared for it.

His greatest fear was that he might strike a shark.

This, in fact, was exactly what happened.

Jack went down head first, but he managed to turn himself in the water, and was just rising to the surface when all at once he saw a huge shark heading for him.

It was a desperate situation.

To avoid the shark was simply impossible.

If he allowed himself to rise, the monster which was already turning over on his back, would be sure to seize him by the legs.

Now Jack usually carried with him a long, keen bladed knife to use in case of emergency.

This he managed to keep by him through all his troubles in the temple.

He now drew it and prepared to defend himself.

On came the shark. In a second or two it was close beside him.

Jack trod water and held his ground.

The shark turned over on its back and prepared for the final act.

But Jack was too quick for him.

He flung up his hand and plunged the knife into the shark's belly.

In an instant the waters were dyed with blood.

It now became impossible to see anything; it had been hard enough before, but it was worse now.

Jack started to rise to the surface, and it was about time, for his strength was almost gone.

Suddenly he felt a strong arm thrown around his body, and he was tightly grasped.

The blood of the shark had so thickened the water, that it was impossible to see even what little could have been seen before.

Jack could not struggle; his wind was almost gone.

A moment more and he was on the surface.

A dark-skinned swarthy native had him in charge.

"So, sahib! So, so! You almost go feed de shark dat time!" he said. "See, dey look for you! Shall I give you up? Shall I take you to my boat? Say you pay—all right den."

Here was another one trying to bleed him.

Jack looked at the fellow closely.

It seemed as if he had seen him somewhere before.

The man had now released his hold, and they balanced themselves on the water facing each other.

Jack still had the knife, so he felt comparatively safe.

At a little distance away a small boat floated.

Further off, half lost in the gloom, was the pirates' craft.

Koosh and Kassola were out with three men in a boat, searching for him everywhere.

But Jack could not see this boat, and of course did not know.

He determined to make the best terms he could with this fellow.

"Come, you saved my life," he said. "I'll reward you well if you put me ashore."

"How much?"

Jack named a liberal sum.

"Too little. Twice as much," said the man.

"Very good; it shall be so if you will take me ashore and give me a chance to get it. Of course you know I've just escaped from Koosh, the pirate, whose ship you see over there. I have no money with me here."

"Me understand all dat, sahib. Me know you. Come, swim to my boat."

When they gained the boat and the man took up the oars Jack asked him his name.

"I am called Tourman," was the reply. "I know Harkaway Pasha very well."

"Evidently you do," replied Jack; "but I do not remember you. Where have we met?"

"I was with you on the Nile when you sailed past Khartoum."

"Ah! I remember you now. I thought your face was familiar. But how comes it that you are here, Tourman?"

"I am in the pearl fishing business now, sahib. I saw you jump off the pirate's ship; so I go down after you. Good job, I was just in time to save you from the shark."

So they talked as they pulled toward the shore.

But Jack did not feel any too well satisfied.

Tourman was a villainous-looking fellow.

His demand for money had been exorbitant and too promptly made to suit Jack.

"Tourman will bear watching," he said to himself. "I shan't feel safe until I'm actually on shore."

Meanwhile, the pearl diver kept up a continual chatter in his pigeon English, which he had probably picked up at Suakin or Port Said.

He enlarged on his own services and on the scoundrelly character of Koosh, on Jack's narrow escape, and kept it up until it became tiresome.

At last they reached the shore, and upon landing, Tourman led Jack up a narrow street.

"This is the shortest way to your hotel, sahib," he said. "Follow me—we shall soon be there."

It was now entirely dark, and as Jack was wholly unacquainted with the city, he saw no other course but to trust to Tourman and follow on.

Presently they turned into a still narrower street where the houses were small and mean.

Jack did not like the situation at all, and was about to say so when suddenly Tourman clapped his hand to his stomach and commenced to writhe as though in pain.

"What is the trouble?" asked Jack.

"Ah, I suffer! I suffer!" groaned Tourman. "I must have wine. It is the only thing that relieves me when these attacks come on."

He did not act like a man shamming. Jack eyed him a minute and came to the conclusion that this was no trick.

"Can we get wine anywhere near here?" he inquired.

"There is a shop just beyond here," replied Tourman. "It is kept by a friend of mine. There they sell the best of wine. Ah, ze cramp! It come again! It is from being too long in de water, sahib. Dat is de cause!"

It all seemed natural enough, and the man appeared to be suffering. Moreover Jack did not feel at all averse to a glass of wine himself after all he had been through.

So they entered the shop, and Tourman spoke to the woman who kept it in Arabic.

She led the way out into a garden where there were tables and seats beneath a large spreading palm.

The wine was immediately brought and placed upon the table.

Tourman eagerly drank a large glass full and declared that he felt better.

"It is good wine, sahib," he said. "Drink!"

"It looks so," replied Jack.

"Allah, but you do not drink!"

"I was looking at you. I thought true followers of the prophet never drank wine."

"In cases like this we make an exception, sahib. I am sick. Eet ees necessity. But drink. You will find the wine good."

Jack was rather dubious about tasting it, but he felt that there was no reason to hesitate since Tourman had drank so freely.

The woman had already poured him out a glass and he now drank it down.

It had a peculiar sweetish taste that he did not altogether fancy.

As he set down the glass he saw Tourman's eyes fixed upon him—the woman was also watching him from the doorway.

"Something wrong here," thought Jack. "Heavens, how strangely I feel! I've been drugged! I must get out of this without a moment's loss of time!"

He staggered to his feet.

Everything was swimming about him, and objects were beginning to increase enormously in size.

"You scoundrel!" cried Jack. "You have poisoned me!"

"Sit down!" cried Tourman. "Sit down!"

His voice sounded like thunder heard a long way off.

Jack tried to make the door.

In an instant Tourman was upon him.

Jack drew his knife and struck at him.

The blow was badly aimed, but it drove Tourman back.

Then someone whistled sharply, and a huge dog sprang out of the wine shop.

It was a bloodhound as big as a calf, but to Jack's enlarged vision the brute looked as big as an elephant.

He made one spring, and would have had Harkaway by the throat if he had not struck at him with all his might, burying the knife to the hilt in the bloodhound's breast.

With a dying yelp the dog fell back.

Jack fell too.

It was his last effort.

Entirely unconscious he dropped to the floor.

Here was a serious state of affairs for Young Jack Harkaway.

Tourman was nothing but a scoundrel of the worst type. The pearl diver knew that Jack was enormously rich. His idea was that he must have an immense sum of money about him.

Tourman knew nothing of banks and credit and that sort of thing. If he had been a millionaire he would have at least made the effort to carry his million on his person; he thought that Jack probably did the same.

"Allah! but there is plenty of fight in the man!" he exclaimed to the woman who kept the wine shop. "See, he has killed the dog."

"Which must be paid for, snapped the woman. "Who is the man?"

"A rich English pasha. He is loaded with gold."

"Half of which must be mine!"

"Allah! But you are greedy! Will you wait till I get it?"

"We must get it now, Tourman," said a hard-featured man, entering at that moment. "Can we keep him here? No! The police will be after us! We shall be summoned before the cadi; we shall be bastinadoed, perhaps beheaded. It will not do!"

"Who asked you to wait?" demanded Tourman, sulkily. "The only thing is he must never leave this place alive. Of course, he is not dead now."

"No, no! He only sleeps," replied the woman, hastily. "Presently he will revive. What we do must be done without delay!"

The pearl diver gave a muttered exclamation of disgust.

"You are too impatient," he said. "I am going to work. Why not? What is to be done is to be done, but tell me what is to be done with Harkaway Pasha after it is done?"

"We will drop him there," said the man, pointing to a large iron ring imbedded in the stone flooring of the courtyard.

"Ah! then the story I have heard is true. Those who enter your place sometimes do not leave it."

"That is right. When I raise that trap door and throw the pasha down, he falls into an old sewer which empties into the sea. He will never be seen alive again."

"That's what we want," replied Tourman. "Now we can go to work."

Tourman's method was quick and effective.

He bent over Young Jack Harkaway and proceeded to search him.

He was more successful than might have been expected.

He did not find the talisman, but he did find a money belt which Jack had round his waist, in which was concealed nearly two thousand dollars in gold.

To Tourman and his friends this was a fortune.

They almost came to blows over the division of the spoils; and, in fact, there might have been a good old-fashioned three-cornered fight if Young Jack had not shown symptoms of returning consciousness, which caused them to settle up their differences in a hurry and go to work again.

The wine shop keeper then pulled up the trap-door, and Young Jack's body was tumbled down into the dark, foul-smelling hole beneath.

Here was another terrible ordeal.

The shaking up which Jack had received in being dragged to the trap-door revived him, and the fall finished it.

Fortunately the drop was not more than ten feet.

Jack came to himself as he struck the water, which ran through the old sewer.

He struck it feet foremost and stood upright, his head throbbing with pain.

It was a terrible shock to come back to life in a place like this.

Jack fell against the wall and put out his hands to defend himself, half expecting to encounter some enemy.

He was fearfully confused and for a moment or two scarcely knew where he was.

A deathlike silence pervaded the place—silence broken only by the scurrying of rats to and fro.

"This is a bad job," he thought. "They've thrown me down into some infernal hole or other. I must keep cool if I expect to escape with my life."

Fortunately he was provided with the means of throwing light on the subject, having a large box of fuses about him enclosed in a water proof case.

One of these lighted showed him the true nature of the place into which he had fallen.

"I must move on or I shall be suffocated," thought Jack.

He put up his hand and was able to discover the direction from which the air came.

The water running through the sewer was not more than three feet deep, and Jack started on, his feet sinking in the slimy ooze at the bottom with every step.

It was no great distance to the mouth of the sewer.

The water increased as he advanced. Evidently the tide was coming in.

By the time Jack reached the end, the water was up to his waist.

Lighting another fuse he took a look.

A great disappointment awaited him.

His hope had been that he might be able to swim out into the sea, rise to the surface and so escape.

But no such opportunity offered. There was a wire screen in front of the mouth of the sewer.

No doubt this was open below, but Jack did not feel at all like diving.

Suppose there was no opening, and he was to become entangled in the meshes of the net?

He did not feel like undertaking the risk.

He tried to feel around with his feet, but he could not discover the opening, if there was one.

Escape seemed to be cut off, and Jack was just giving up in despair when he discovered a rotten, old ladder leaning against the wall.

"This may help me," he thought. "Of course, it was not without a purpose that this ladder was placed here. All I can do is to explore and find out where it leads to."

He struck another fuse and began to ascend the ladder.

It was longer than he thought for, and so rotten that several of the rounds broke under his feet, but at last he reached the top.

Here he found himself under a trap door.

It was fastened down but it seemed rather shaky, and after several attempts Jack managed to force it.

He hesitated for a moment, waiting and listening.

But all was darkness and silence, and Young Jack pushed boldly on coming up into a room entirely deserted and bare of furnishing.

Here were heavy stone walls like the walls of some fortress; there were two windows protected by heavy iron bars, but as far as Jack could discover, no door except the trap by which he had come up from below.

"Here's a puzzler," thought Jack, as he wandered about the room. "It's easy enough to get in here, but how is a fellow going to get out unless he goes back into that infernal hole down there?"

At first there seemed to be but one answer to the question, but upon striking another fuse Jack discovered that there was a trap-door in the ceiling also.

It was easy to reach this, for there were iron bars bedded in the wall leading up to it and forming a regular ladder.

Anxious to be through with the business as soon as possible, Young Jack climbed up, unfastened the trap, pushed it aside, and came out upon the roof.

He now found himself on top of a large, square building close to the water's edge, the roof of which joined with another, where several people were walking about and lying off on carpets, smoking long pipes.

"I am safe now," thought Jack. "They cannot refuse to let me pass down into the street. I must fix upon some story or another to suit the occasion. I fancy it can be easily arranged."

Not as easy as he thought.

Further trouble awaited Young Jack Harkaway.

As yet the men on the adjoining roof had not discovered him, but as soon as he moved toward them they came running toward him.

"Allah! But it is Harkaway Pasha!" cried a familiar voice.

Two men rushed upon Young Jack and seized him before he could raise a finger to defend himself.

One was Kassola, the other Captain Koosh!

Jack had simply come up out of the frying pan into the fire.

The captain of the pirate craft was jubilant.

All attempts to temporize with him proved useless.

Jack was hurried back on board the ship, which immediately put out into the harbor.

Once more Young Jack Harkaway was in the power of the pirates of the Red Sea.

[THE END.]

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